

# Protect Your Family Against Poisoning

By IRVIN KERLAN, M.D.

**M**ORBIDITY and mortality statistics reveal a high frequency of poisoning from accidental ingestion and other types of misuse of drugs and household chemicals by young children. Parents need to know more about how to protect their families from such accidents.

The prevention of accidental poisoning in the home has been an active undertaking of the American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Accident Prevention, the American Medical Association Committee on Toxicology, and the American Public Health Association Subcommittee on Chemical Poisons.

Government representatives of the Public Health Service, the Food and Drug Administration, and the Agricultural Research Service of the United States Department of Agriculture are members of the committees. The National Safety Council, the American Red Cross, pharmaceutical organizations, drug manufacturers, medical societies, health departments, insurance companies, and others concerned with the safe distribution of drugs are also engaged in averting misuse of drugs and household

chemicals through label warnings, directions, special packaging, and educational programs.

Although gains are to be expected through special educational efforts and informative labeling of drugs and economic and caustic poisons, further progress can be made through a leaflet which may be prominently placed in the bathroom or kitchen where it will serve to remind the family how to safeguard the daily handling and storing of the many potentially harmful substances so prevalent in the home.

This thought led to the publication of "Protect Your Family Against Poisoning" as a pilot project of the Food and Drug Administration to encourage use of the pamphlet by health groups, food and drug manufacturers and distributors, leaders in safety education, and publishers, in reaching persons in the home. The Administration will gladly grant permission for reprinting the circular.

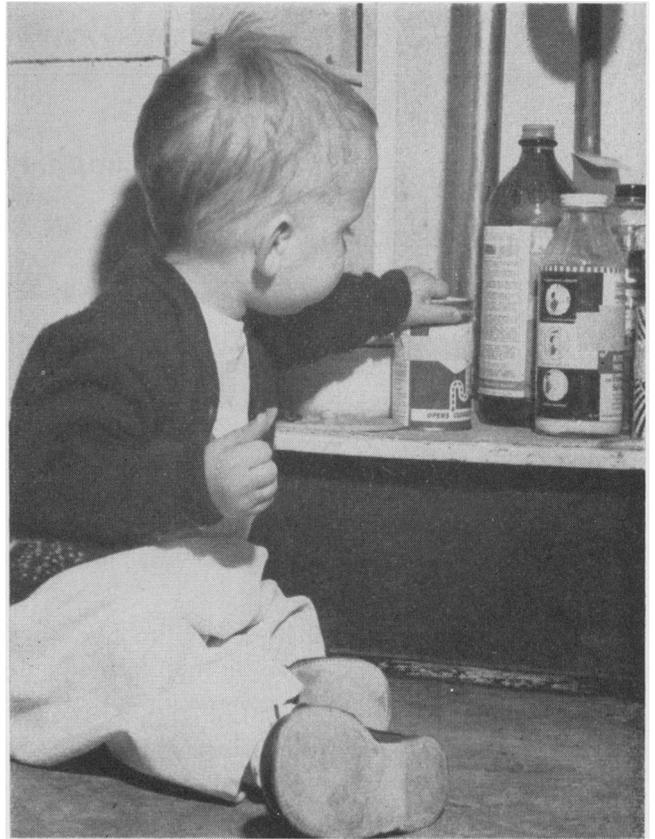
Almost all 10,000 copies of the circular printed in November 1955 have been distributed. The leaflet has received many commendations for its practical usefulness. So far, it has been reproduced or cited in a number of health journals and pharmaceutical publications. It has been presented on radio and television shows and mentioned in speeches by government officials. The National Safety Council has reprinted the pamphlet and so have State, county, and city health departments.

Through the reprinting by one pharmaceutical wholesaler in its safety booklet, 1,250,000 copies will become available. An estimated half million copies have already been printed by *FDC Reports* and *FDC Drug Letter* for distribution by retail druggists to their customers.

---

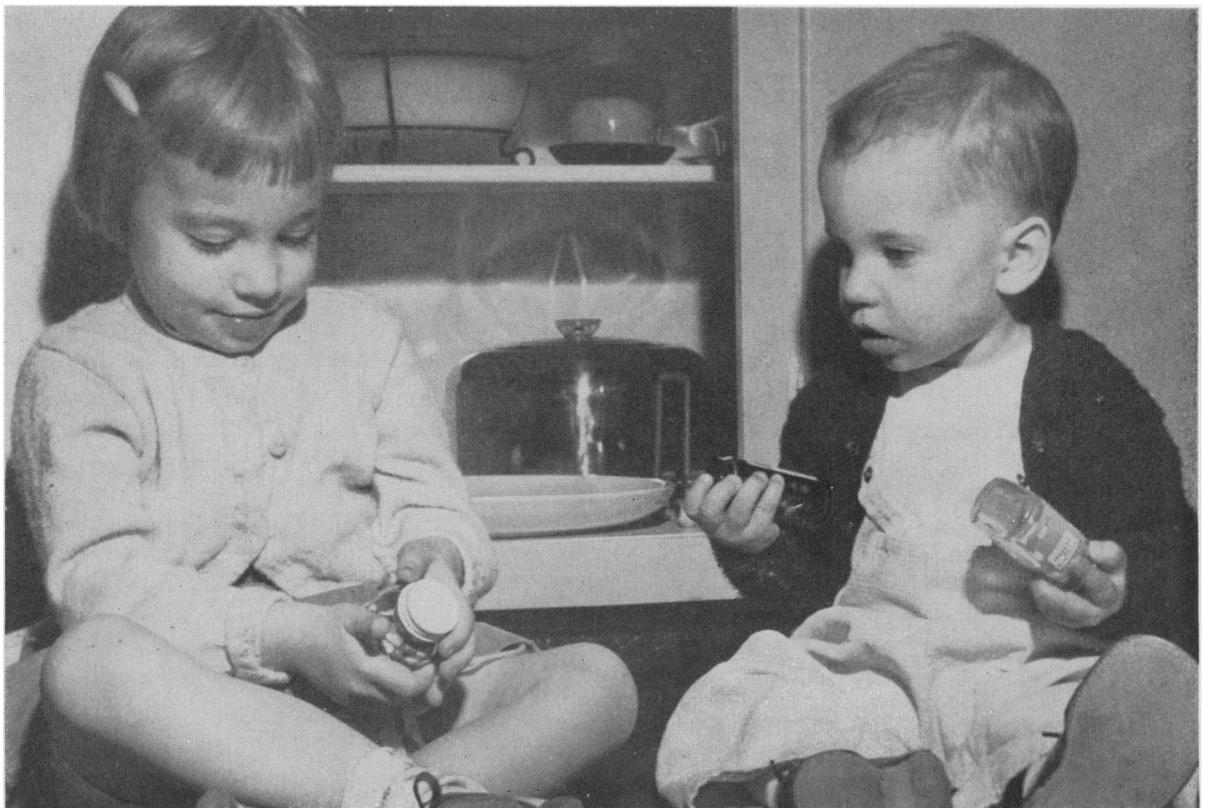
*Dr. Kerlan, the author of "Protect Your Family Against Poisoning," is associate medical director, Food and Drug Administration, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. The photographs on the opposite page are provided through the courtesy of Dr. Charles M. Cameron, Jr., associate professor of public health administration, University of North Carolina School of Public Health. The pictures are of his own children.*

---



Beneath the kitchen sink may be a handy place for storage, but it's also within reach of busy little hands. "Protect Your Family Against Poisoning" reminds us to keep all drugs, poisons, and other household chemicals out of reach of children and away from foods . . . to safeguard brightly colored capsules and tablets that look like candy . . . to warn youngsters not to eat or drink any drugs and chemicals they find.

*Turn to next page for text of leaflet.*



---

## Text of Pamphlet on Poisoning

*Keep this where you will see it often.*

- In the event of an accident, immediately call a physician or the nearest hospital.
  - Keep all drugs, poisons, and other household chemicals out of the reach of children and away from food.
  - Lock up all dangerous substances.
  - Do not store poisonous or inflammable substances (kerosene, gasoline, rat poisons, and so on) in food or beverage containers.
  - Read all labels and carefully follow "caution" statements. Even if a chemical is not labeled "poison," incorrect use may be dangerous.
  - Do not eat or serve foods which smell or look abnormal and remember that they may poison household and farm animals.
  - Be sure all poisons are clearly marked. This can be done by sealing with adhesive tape or using a special marker.
  - When you throw away drugs or hazardous materials be sure the contents cannot be reached by children or pets.
  - Warn small children not to eat or drink drugs, chemicals, plants, or berries they find, without your permission. Insist on this.
  - Use cleaning fluids with adequate ventilation only, and avoid breathing vapors.
  - Protect your skin and eyes when using insect poisons, weed killers, solvents, and cleaning agents. Be sure to wash thoroughly after use of such things and promptly remove contaminated clothing.
  - Do not allow food or food utensils to become contaminated when using insect sprays, aerosol mists, rat poisons, weed killers, or cleaning agents.
  - Do not take or give medicine in the dark. Be sure you can clearly read the label on the container.
  - When measuring drugs give it your full attention. Give infants and young children drugs only as directed by your physician.
  - Before measuring liquid medicine always shake the bottle thoroughly.
  - Safeguard tablets which are candied, flavored or colored, since children eat them like candy.
  - Do not take medicine from an unlabeled bottle—transparent tape over the label will protect it.
  - Date all drug supplies when you buy them.
  - Weed out the left-overs regularly from your medicine chest—especially any prescription drug that your physician ordered for a particular illness.
  - Use a prescription drug only for the patient for whom the physician ordered it.
  - Read all directions and caution statements on the drug label each time you plan to use it.
-